

Creative Resistance

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Principles of Post Prohibition Drug Control

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1. We affirm the irreducible dignity and worth of each person and uphold every person's right and access to life, health, security, equality before and under the law, and unique self-expression within the matrix of social practices and community life. We recognize that the individual and the social, the personal and the political, are inextricably woven together, and that moving toward "the common good" requires respect and care for one another within a field of diverse, complex *individuals-in-society*. While we affirm personal autonomy, seek to promote individual, family and community well-being, and limit personal and collective harm, we recognize the intricate and continuously negotiated interplay entailed in simultaneously maintaining these values.
2. We declare that the prohibition of controlled substances, embodied in the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, has utterly failed in achieving its objectives, and that it has proved "counter-productive in its side-effects, wasteful of public resources, destructive in its cultivation of criminality and commercial abuse, and inhumane in its operation" (The Angel Document, 2004). Instead of reducing the supply of drugs, drug prohibition has produced a black market that makes drugs widely available and spawns significant health and social pathologies.
3. "Not all drug use is abuse." We recognize the use of a variety of plants within diverse cultures which for centuries has been part of normalized social patterns and rituals. We acknowledge the positive personal and social dimensions of some drug use. Specifically:
 - Physical: Pain relief, aid to sleep, decreased risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke, increased endurance
 - Psychological: Relaxation, relief of stress, decreased anxiety, increased alertness, enhanced creative expression, mood alteration, pleasure
 - Social/spiritual: Facilitation of social interaction, social cohesion, religious/spiritual or ceremonial use
 - Economic: Job creation, agricultural development, tax revenue generation
4. We uphold the maxim "If you can plant it, you can use it." This not only entails a recognition of the potential benefits of natural products, it allows for personal cultivation and use of plants and herbs.
5. We affirm the importance of accurate, evidence-based information and genuine education regarding both the harms and the benefits of drug use. Such education should address a variety of issues – chemical makeup of the drug, physical and/or psychological effects, positive and negative social dimensions of drug use, instruction on safe and proper use, etc.

6. We recognized that a new post-prohibition paradigm will need to include both public health and human rights aspects. The public health perspective is needed to maintain the focus of reduction of health and social harms to individuals, families and communities. The human rights aspect is needed to ensure that the rights of individuals and groups who choose to use substances are respected.
7. We affirm that drugs should be available in a variety of concentrations and preparations so that individuals can have choice. This honours the dignity, autonomy and wisdom of each individual and recognizes the diversity of various cultural and social practices.
8. We endorse the provision of beneficial resources, treatment and support for those caught in harmful patterns of drug use.
9. We call for the cessation of civil and legal sanctions as a means for controlling drug use and drug users. Punishment must not be employed as a tool for social control. Drug availability and use should be carried out in a way that does not marginalize or stigmatize those who use such substances.
10. We strongly affirm Canadian sovereignty in the formation and implementation of its own national drug policy and support Canada's role internationally as a significant player towards ending prohibition.
11. We believe that the sale of drugs should not generate any corporate profits. Our society has learned from the experience with alcohol and tobacco that when the legal for-profit model is used to distribute substances, the corporations involved are very difficult to control.
12. We believe that all tax revenue that is generated from the sale of substances should be returned to drug treatment and prevention programs.
13. We recognize that the current model of prohibition has provided and/or supplemented incomes for individuals and families who grow, import, wholesale and retail currently illegal drugs. As with the end of alcohol prohibition, there needs to be a process by which these criminalized individuals and groups can participate in the new legal distribution process. Inclusion of criminalized people increases the chance of integration into the mainstream and therefore the pursuit of non-criminalized activities and employment.
14. We believe that the least intrusive method of controlling substances should be used and therefore medical control of substances should be kept to an absolute minimum. This control option should only be used when there is clear evidence that other controlling mechanisms have failed.
15. We believe that regulation will play a role in the post-prohibition paradigm. However, these regulatory bodies must honour the cultural and social practises of individuals, groups, and nations.
16. All individuals who have a criminal record from possession or dealing of drugs will be automatically pardoned. All individuals who are currently incarcerated for possession or dealing drugs will be immediately released.